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AUTHOR Andrews, Theodore E.
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ABSTRACT

Five states (Georgia, South Carolina, Oklahoma, Florida, and Arizona) are currently either administering or field-testing classroom observation systems for certification or employment decisions regarding beginning teachers. In Georgia, a beginning teacher has three years to demonstrate competence. Observations are completed by an external data collector, an administrator, and a teacher. The Teacher Performance Assessment Instrument (TPAI), containing 14 competencies and 45 indicators, is used during observations. The teaching candidate in South Carolina must pass a basic skills entrance examination, complete an approved college program, and pass the appropriate certification area examination to receive initial certification and eligibility for employment. Arizona is presently field-testing the Georgia TPAI with the addition of a teacher educator to the roster of observers. Oklahoma makes a distinction between the license which a beginning teacher receives and a certificate which is given only after demonstration of teaching skills. The Florida testing program is related to certification, but places the major responsibility for the decision with the local school superintendent. The candidate is eligible for an initial teaching certificate upon successfully completing the testing program and meeting other state requirements. (JD)

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Assessing Beginning Teacher Performance

Theodore E. Andrews

Olympia, Washington

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Assessing Beginning Teacher Performance*

Beginning teacher performance-based certification programs, developed and operating in several states, are now being studied carefully by many educators who recognize that these systems may become the basis for certification, employment and even merit pay in other states. Five states (Georgia, South Carolina, Oklahoma, Florida and Arizona) were identified in a 1982-83 survey as either administering or field-testing classroom observation systems for certification or employment decisions. This brief overview has been prepared in order to give readers an understanding of the essential characteristics of each of these systems.

Georgia

Georgia established the first performance-based certification program in 1980. This system has been widely publicized and adapted in modified form in Dade County, Florida, and in Arizona. The development began with the leadership of the State Superintendent of Schools, Charles Nix, in 1972. (It is interesting to note that the other four systems began with legislation).

The Teacher Performance Assessment Instrument (TPAI) contains fourteen competencies and 45 indicators. A beginning teacher has three years to demonstrate his/her competence. The observations are completed by three persons: an external data collector, an administrator, and a teacher. Two types of items appear on the TPAI, hierarchical and discrete.

Each indicator has a possible score of one to five. For hierarchical indicators the observer chooses from among five descriptor statements. For example, competency 7 (Exhibit A) has five indicators, one of which is "provides feedback to learners throughout the lesson." This indicator is hierarchical in nature as an examination of the following descriptors will indicate.

Exhibit A

7. Provides Feedback to Learners Throughout the Lesson.

   1. Accepts learner comments or performance without feedback about their adequacy.
   2. Responds to negative aspects of student work, but few comments are made about positive aspects.
   3. Informs students of the adequacy of their performance. Few errors pass by without being addressed.
   4. Helps learners evaluate the adequacy of their own or each others' performance.
   5. In addition to 4, the teacher probes for the source of misunderstandings which arise.

In this case the observer chooses from among the five descriptor statements the one which best characterizes the teaching performance. The numeral associated with the selected descriptor becomes the "score" for that indicator.

In contrast with the descriptors for hierarchical, competency 8, indicators are four in number and represent equally important and desirable practices which are to be demonstrated. In this case the observer notes all of the descriptor statements which are demonstrated. A "score" of one is assigned if none of the descriptors are observed, a two if one of the descriptors is observed, and so on up to five.

Exhibit B

8. Uses Acceptable Written and Oral Expression with Learners.

Ratings	Descriptors
1. None of the descriptors is evident.	a. Speech is understandable
2. One of the descriptors is evident.	b. Oral expression is correct.
3. Two of the descriptors are evident.	c. Written material is legible.
4. Three of the descriptors are evident.	d. Written expression is correct.
5. Four of the descriptors are evident.	

Minimum acceptable levels for the 45 indicators were developed through a survey of expert opinion (Johnson, Ellett & Capie, 1979). The survey instrument was completed by 298 experts (260 classroom teachers, 20 full-time data collectors, and 18 coordinators of student teachers). All experts were recommended by their colleagues as outstanding professional workers; all nad classroom teaching experience; and 273 had received data collector training. Eighteen of the indicators were assigned a minimum acceptable level of three, twenty-six were assigned a minimum acceptable level of four, and one indicator was assigned a minimum acceptable level of five.

A candidate is observed in the fall and in the spring by three separate observers (an administrator, a peer teacher and an external observer). This results in six "scores" for each indicator. Each score is compared to the minimum acceptable level and assigned a "1" if at or above that level and a "0" if below that level. A competency score is calculated by totaling the number of ratings which received a "1" for all of the indicators associated with that competency. Using this procedure each competency has a total possible score of six multiplied by the number of indicators associated with that particular competency. For example, competency 7 has five indicators and therefore a possible total score of 30. A candidate is judged to have successfully demonstrated the competency if 75% of the total possible ratings were "1's". For example in the matrix shown in Table 1 there are five indicators which were observed and rated on six separate occasions. The ratings have been transformed and assigned a "1" or a "0". In this case 24 of the possible 30 ratings were at or above the minimum acceptable level, the score for the competency is therefore 80% (24/30), and the candidate would be judged to have successfully demonstrated this competency.

Table 1

Hypothetical Data for Competency 7, Communicates with Learners

Indicator	Minimum Acceptable Level	Ratings					
		Observation #1			Observation #2		
		Obs 1	Obs 2	Obs 3	Obs 1	Obs 2	Obs 3
1	4	1	0	1	1	0	1
2	4	0	1	1	1	1	1
3	4	1	1	1	1	1	1
4	3	1	1	0	1	0	1
5	5	1	1	1	1	1	0

Developing such a system is not inexpensive. While it is difficult to obtain precise dollar figures for the development and operation of any state performance system, Georgia estimates its developmental costs at $500,000 and its annual operational expenses at $3,500,000.

South Carolina

The development of the South Carolina instrument, the Assessment of Performance in Teaching Observation Instrument (APT), began with the passage of the Education Improvement Act of 1979. The program was field tested during the 1982-83 school year and became operational during this school year.

It is important to emphasize that the South Carolina performance assessment system is not related to certification, but rather to employment decisions. The teaching candidate must pass the basic skills entrance examination, complete a collegiate approved program, and pass the appropriate certification area examination. This person then receives an initial certificate and is eligible for employment.

The person when employed receives his/her first probationary contract. The school district must use the state-developed APT to assess this beginning teacher for purposes of retention. The teacher has two years to demonstrate the required skills at which time he/she is eligible for an annual contract. During the annual contract period (up to two years), the teacher must also demonstrate his/her competency by passing a test adopted by a school district that meets criteria provided by the State Board of Education.

After five years of teaching service, the teacher must renew his/her teaching certificate. Since a teacher will only achieve five years of teaching service if he/she achieves a passing score on the APT instrument

during the probationary contract periods, all teachers who renew their certificates will have passed the APT test. However, the state does not do the assessing; the assessment is done by the local school districts.

The data is collected by three observers; an experienced teacher, a principal, and a district administrator were recommended as observers during the field test. The APT instrument asks the observers to record simply whether the required skill was or was not demonstrated. A description of the behaviors is included in the instrument. Minimum levels for performance were established through a standard setting process that used the performance of experienced teachers to establish minimum levels.

The South Carolina Educator Improvement Task Force (directed by an educator who had previously worked with a Georgia performance-based project) developed a total system (cognitive and performance tests) and estimated that the annual operating cost would be $1,600,000. However, during 1982-83 only $600,000 was available to support the program. It should be noted that the Georgia program represents a greater state fiscal commitment because the external data collectors are state employees.

Arizona

Arizona is presently field testing the Georgia TPAI with some modifications. Four observers, not three, are used; a teacher educator has been added. Also competencies in computer literacy and bilingual education may be added in future years.

The above three state policies and assessment instruments are interrelated by the developmental work completed in Georgia. The following states, Oklahoma and Florida, represent different approaches.

Oklahoma

Oklahoma makes the distinction between a license which a beginning teacher receives and a certificate which is given only after the demonstration of teaching skills in the classroom. The program, based upon Bill 1706 passed in 1980, provides for a comprehensive series of changes in teacher education policies, including the entry year assistance program.

A three person team, (a teacher, a school administrator, and a college or university faculty member), is responsible for assessing the beginning teacher. A special feature of the Oklahoma program is the role of the teacher who serves on the assessment team. That person is designated as a teacher consultant (TC) who is responsible for providing 72 hours of observational consultation to the beginning teacher for which the TC receives a $500 stipend. The observation team independently visits the teacher three times and by a majority vote, following the third observation, makes the decision on whether or not to recommend the candidate for certification. The beginning teacher has two years to demonstrate his/her competence.

The Oklahoma performance instruction addresses four areas: Human Relations, Teaching and Assessment, Classroom Management, and Professionalism. In each area a series of brief descriptive statement appears. The observers are asked to record strengths, concerns and recommendations. There is no scoring key for the Oklahoma instrument. The observers record their personal reactions.

Florida

The Florida testing program for beginning teachers, established through legislation, became effective on July 1, 1982. It has been developed by a coalition of interested groups, including the state education department, but it is <u>not</u> a state program. The testing instruments which are still

being developed have been made available to local school districts in Florida. The school districts may, if they wish, use these instruments to meet the legislative requirements of the Beginning Teacher Program. Approximately 90% of the local school districts (54) are using these instruments.

Because the instruments have not been developed by the state, nor is their use required by the state, the Florida program is structurally unlike the testing programs in other states.

The Florida testing program is related to certification, but places the major responsibility for the decision with the local school superintendent. Upon successful completion of the program, the candidate is eligible for the initial regular teaching certificate, if the candidate has met other requirements. The state requires the school district to provide a full year of evaluation and support by a team composed of a peer teacher, principal and one other professional. The program does not require the candidate to achieve a minimum score on a state developed performance test. The data from the performance observation is only one part of the portfolio material submitted to the school superintendent. The school superintendent makes a certification recommendation based upon a review of the candidate's complete portfolio.

The instrument that has been developed by the coalition includes only performance statements that have been validated in either process-product, experimental, or correlational research studies. A Handbook of the Florida Performance Measurement System is also available which provides detailed descriptions of the research studies used in developing the instrument Presently the instrument only asks the observers to record the number of times a particular behavior occurs. No scoring key has been developed to establish minimum competency levels.

Several of the characteristics of each of these state systems are illustrated in Exhibit A. The efforts in these states need to be studied carefully. Approaches to the assessment of teacher performance developed in these states may become a major educational movement or simply another fad. With state authority and fiscal resources behind these efforts, it is more likely that a major shift in approaches to certifying teachers has begun.

	Origin	Instrument	Number of Observers	Minimum Passing Score Established	Certificate of Employment	Operational or Field-Testing
Georgia	State Superintendent	14 Competencies 45 Educators	3 Observers External Data Collector Administrator Teacher	Yes	Certification	Operational
South Carolina	Legislative	5 Performance Dimensions 46 Observation Statements	3 Observers Teacher Principal District Administrator	Yes	Employment	Operational
Arizona	Legislative	14 Competencies 45 Indicators	4 Observers External Data Collector Administrator Teacher/College University representative	Yes	Certification	Field Testing
Oklahoma	Legislative	15 Categories 36 Statements	3 Observers Teacher Consultant Administrator College, University representative	No	Certification	Operational
Florida	Legislative	24 Competencies 6 Domains 20 Positive Statements 17 Negative Statements	3 Observers Peer Teacher Administrator Another Proffessional	No	Certification	Operational